

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **SEDAR COMMITTEE**

**Hotel Ballast  
Wilmington, North Carolina**

**December 2, 2019**

## **SUMMARY MINUTES**

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

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Other observers and participants attached.



The SEDAR Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Hotel Ballast, Wilmington, North Carolina, on Monday, December 2, 2019, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We are going to get going again, and so the next item is the SEDAR Activities Update, and I am going to turn it back to Chip and John.

DR. COLLIER: There is a lot of activities going on in SEDAR, as usual. SEDAR 58 is -- They just wrapped up their peer review workshop on November 19 to 21. From what I hear, it was a very good workshop, and things went very well, and so there is no SSC review for this one, since it's being handed over to our partners at Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

The next one is SEDAR 59, which is a standard assessment for greater amberjack, and that's currently ongoing, and that one was a delayed assessment due to some of the MRIP estimates, and that is going to be going to the SSC in -- The schedule currently is for a completion date in March of 2020, with review by the SSC in April of 2020.

SEDAR 60, which is red porgy, that's another standard assessment, and this one actually has an in-person meeting, and it's actually going to be going on next week for the in-person workshop, and that's going to be going on December 10 through 12, and this too was a delayed assessment, due to the MRIP estimates, but they have caught back up, and the completion date is March of 2020, and it should be available for review by the SSC in April of 2020.

The next assessment is a benchmark assessment for yellowtail snapper, and this is going to be conducted by the State of Florida. The terminal year is 2017, and there was a data workshop in June of this year, and the assessment workshops are being held currently through December of 2019. The review workshop is scheduled for February, and the assessment is scheduled for completion in March of 2020. This is a joint assessment with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and so we're going to be working with our SSC, in order to have some of our members sit in on their review of the assessment.

SEDAR 68, this is going to be the first research track that is done in the Southeast, and so they have completed the stock ID webinars for this species. Right now, they're going to move forward with two different assessments split at the council boundary, and they had a data scoping call in October, and the terminal year for this assessment is going to be 2017. The data workshop is going to be March of next year, with assessment webinars being held in July through October, and a potential review in March of 2021. After the research track is completed, then an operational assessment is likely to begin in late 2021.

SEDAR 38 update, this is a Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic king mackerel, and this is scheduled to be reviewed by the SSC in April of 2020, and the terms of reference were approved by the Gulf of Mexico in January of 2019 and the South Atlantic Council in March of 2019. The terminal year is through the 2017/2018 fishing year, and the Atlantic and the Gulf component is 2016/2017. It's scheduled to be completed in March of 2020.

There was an update on the SEDAR 28 Gulf of Mexico update, and this one is going to be coordinated with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council as well, because there is some of the stock that goes up into the east coast of Florida for cobia, and so our SSC is going to be,

once again, sending people for us helping review this assessment, with a completion date expected in April of 2020.

We have several upcoming projects, and we already talked about one, SEDAR 66, which is South Atlantic tilefish, and that's going to be an operational assessment. The terminal year for that is 2018, and you guys had already approved the terms of reference in December of 2017, and it was postponed, due to MRIP estimates, but now it's scheduled to restart in April of 2018, with a completion date of April of 2021.

MR. CONKLIN: Sorry to interrupt, but, the tilefish, is that blueline and golden or just golden or just blueline, or what's our intent there?

DR. COLLIER: It's just golden tilefish. Sorry, but, as scientists, we just call them tilefish. There is going to be an update of snowy grouper and SEDAR 36, and the terms of reference were approved by the council in December of 2018, with a terminal year of 2018, and we're expecting a completion date of 2020.

SEDAR 71 is going to be an operational assessment for gag grouper, and the assessment is just in the planning stages, and the terms of reference were approved by you guys -- They were reviewed by the SSC in October, and the terminal year for this assessment is 2019, with an expected completion date of March of 2021. Then we have three more that are actually on the schedule, but not officially named as SEDARs yet, but we have Spanish mackerel, black sea bass, and red grouper in the South Atlantic region. Any questions?

MR. CARMICHAEL: We do have one update on the coordination with the Gulf Council SSC. They have scheduled their May SSC for May 5 through 7, and so we'll be reaching out to our SSC members to get a sense of who can travel down to Tampa for that meeting at that time, and we'll continue to work with the Gulf on coordinating logistics, so our guys can be there for the yellowtail and cobia reviews.

DR. COLLIER: That's all of the activities updates. Do you want us to go into the SSC report?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let me make sure, and so are there any questions on that activities update?

MR. BELL: We decided, or I think we decided, to switch red snapper from research to operational, or we were just discussing that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: We were just discussing it, and I think that's going to come up in the SSC report, and is that right, John? Okay. It will come up under the next two items, but good question. Any other questions? All right. I think we're ready to move into the SSC report, if you guys are. Welcome, Dr. Sedberry.

DR. SEDBERRY: Thank you. Thanks for having me. The SSC had their fall meeting in October, and the report from that meeting is in the briefing book for this meeting, under the root directory, and I don't believe it's put in a sub-folder. The SSC reviewed the current and planned SEDAR activities, and we approved the -- For SEDAR 71, the gag assessment, we approved the schedule and the terms of reference, and we recommended three SSC participants to participate in that SEDAR.

As has been mentioned, we reviewed the SEDAR for yellowtail snapper, and, as was mentioned, the SSC prefers sending a sub-group of the SSC to the Gulf SSC meeting, which I guess it will be in May now, the first or second week, to jointly review the assessment and to develop fishing level recommendations.

For the red snapper SEDAR, we suggested some rewording, which is in the SSC report for the October meeting, for the details on that, and we recommended that the analysts run projections that incorporate the use of the South Atlantic Council's best practices recommendations, and, specifically, we thought some sensitivity runs could include inputs that reflect varying levels of compliance with the best practices recommendations, what tool is used and how often it's used and how it's used.

We also recommended bringing in external experts to be involved with the SEDAR data workshop and assessment workshop and to participate in review with the SSC. Since this was not going to be, or it was up in the air at the time whether this was going to be a research or operational assessment, we felt that, given the importance of this assessment, if it was not going to be a research assessment, it needed that kind of level of review along the way and not just right at the end, and so the SSC is recommending that some external experts be brought in during the process and that those experts include people with red snapper experience, recreational survey statistics, general stock assessment, and selectivity modeling expertise.

The SSC also approved the scope of work for the vermilion snapper and approved the terms of reference as provided, and we approved the scope of work for blueline tilefish, with some minor edits, and we recommended adding a bullet to include the Mid-Atlantic Council in the assessment process, since blueline tilefish extend up into that area, and then we, of course, made recommendations for SSC participants in the SEDAR 66, golden tilefish, under the new revised schedule, and I believe that's it. There is a summary table in the SSC's report that provides a summary of current and planned SEDAR projects and who the SSC participants will be in those upcoming assessments. That's it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Are there questions?

DR. WILLIAMS: I'm obviously not on the committee or anything, but you recommended experts attend the data workshop and assessment workshop for red snapper. If it is run as an operational, there won't be a data workshop and an assessment workshop, per se, and so I'm just curious about the thought process.

DR. SEDBERRY: That's correct, and they won't be run that way, per se, but there will be opportunity to bring in experts in the process by which it will be run, from what I understand.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The SSC requested a workshop, holding it in person, like we've done for some operational, and so that will be -- When we get to the scope of work, that will be in there, and I think that will have to be evaluated by you guys at the Center and then probably discussion at the Steering Committee in May about what that means for timing and workload.

MR. CONKLIN: Would the council have to appoint those experts, much like we do everybody else anyway, or is that going to be out of our --

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, you can appoint those, and you have a fair amount of leeway in who you appoint and how, and, depending on who they are and who they are employed by, you may have to add them to your SEDAR Pool, but, otherwise, you have a lot of leeway in who you appoint to these panels.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Are there other questions? All right. Thank you for that report, and you're sticking around, because I think we're going to talk about other parts of this report in other committees?

DR. SEDBERRY: Yes, and there is parts for the Dolphin Wahoo Committee and for the Snapper Grouper Committee, and so I'll be here all week. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. Next up is SEDAR Approvals.

DR. COLLIER: The first approval we need to do is terms of reference for SEDAR 71, which is the gag grouper assessment. These are typical terms of reference, with little nuances for gag grouper, and some of those nuances are looking at the misidentification of black and gag grouper and some of the landings estimates, as well as some others identified throughout the assessment process.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Questions?

MS. BECKWITH: I am just curious. I am assuming -- Who actually puts these together, because I know that, I as a council member, this is not my forte, and so I read them through, and I think they should great, and then we go through the assessment, and, at some point, we're like, oh, we forgot this or that or the other, and so I guess I'm just curious who put these together.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Consider them boilerplate or starter terms of reference for the different types of assessments within SEDAR that are part of the SEDAR basic practices, best practices, guidelines. Those are then first modified by SEDAR staff, to address the particulars of an assessment, like the species, the terminal year, when the last assessment was, and they take a look at research recommendations and suggestions that would have come from the prior assessment, and then it's given to the appropriate council staff. In our case, that would be the species lead and Mike Errigo, and they're asked if there are any specifics. In Mike's case, say something from the SSC that should be added to the request for that particular assessment.

Once all that is done and there is an in-house draft, it's provided to the Science Center, and, in our case, that would be Erik, for his team to look at and get any comments, and then that goes to the SSC, and the SSC reviews them and comments on them, and then they come to you for final approval, and so it's a pretty drawn-out, exhaustive process, and we try to give everybody a voice in considering what needs to go into them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Good question. Any more questions about the gag terms of reference? Are you look for an approval per species, and so a motion right now to go ahead and approve the gag terms of reference? All right, and so we're looking for a motion from somebody on the committee.

MR. POLAND: **I move to approve the schedule and terms of reference for the gag assessment.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Steve and seconded by Mel. Any more discussion? **Any objection to approval of this motion? Seeing none, the motion is approved.**

DR. COLLIER: As was brought up just a little while ago, for red snapper, there is consideration that is being presented to you guys right not to do red snapper as an operational assessment, and there is the scope of work for red snapper, and we're looking at updating or including additional years, and the model is going to be the traditional BAM model that's used in the South Atlantic region, and the terminal year for data would go through 2019 or 2020, depending on when the assessment would start, as far as time of the year and if they would have data available for that 2020 year.

You can see the list of data inputs, and it's going to be the revised recreational estimates, and it's going to evaluate catch in the recreational and other methods used to evaluate the annual catch limit, and some of those are going to be the estimates developed by the State of Florida. It's also going to look into different things, such as MyFishCount and other information on discard mortality, catch length, and other factors.

It's going to look at newly-available information for steepness, and that might be available for similar species, and include any new information and updated information on discard mortality and life history, and it's going to look at calculating different F metrics other than apical F, and this was done at the last red snapper assessment, and it was also done for black sea bass, and then they're going to look at running alternative projections based on the use of descending devices and venting tools when releasing red snapper.

DR. BELCHER: So do we have rates that we're looking at when we talk about the run alternative projections incorporating the use of that, and is that an approach on how that's going to be done, or is there a paper that we're referencing on that? I'm just kind of curious to help fill in the gap as to what people are looking at.

DR. COLLIER: We don't have any information yet, but we are going to try to gather information as it comes along, and hopefully something will be available.

MR. POLAND: I am just thinking that might be something to discuss at a data workshop, since it sounds like the SSC would like to bring in some outside experts and have a little mini data workshop for this assessment, and so that could certainly be something we could task them with.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more discussion?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I would just comment on the process in general, and so we just did -- You notice we just did terms of reference, and this is essentially a precursor to the terms of reference. The Science Center uses this to evaluate the workload within a given year, and so the process is that you guys approve this, and it will be submitted to the Science Center by I think it's maybe March 1 of next year, so they can evaluate the workload that's necessary prior to the Steering Committee meeting in May, and then, at that point, he would be approving the work requests that we have for 2022.

Now, this will be part of 2021, potentially, depending on the timing of things, because this was already penciled in as a research track, and so they will have to evaluate this relative to the other stuff in that year and the timing of data delivery, so we'll know when it happens, and they were going to review all of these things, and the Science Center can give us some feedback on what they can do and how they can do it, and that's where I think it's going to be important to figure out the logistics of some of the things the SSC requested, like bringing in the outside experts and holding this workshop, and I'm sure the Science Center would like to know, if we hold a workshop, what are we specifically doing and to make sure that we have the information available so that it's effective. I see a lot of that playing out next year, once the council says, yes, we're comfortable doing this now as an operational, and working with the Center and the SEDAR and the SSC to fill in these details.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so let me try to reiterate what we're doing here. If I understand it, what we're doing is we're saying that, instead of the research track, that the recommendation from the SSC is to do this as an operational, but also there is some nuances here, like run these alternative projections incorporating the use of descending devices and venting tools, as well as the big one for me, which was the reason that I wanted to use the research track, was the selectivity concerns and incorporating the FWRI data, which was some selectivity information that came at the last minute that couldn't be incorporated into the last stock assessment, and so this would be changing this from the research track to the operational, and that's what we're doing here.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, that's correct, and I would imagine that this would probably be one of the most involved operational that we will do, which means that it will probably have a longer preparation window and more resources of the Science Center.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are there more questions or concerns? Once again, this is the scope of work, and so this is the precursor to the terms of reference, and we're switching from research track to operational, and so I think that we're going to go over some other operational assessments, and so maybe one motion after we look at all of these operational assessment scope of works?

DR. COLLIER: I just wanted to point out that John had talked about the process, and we do have that process written here at the bottom of page 2 and the top of page 3, on some of the process that we were thinking as staff.

MS. MCCAWLEY: You mean to bring in these outside experts? Okay. I see it down there at the bottom. Any more questions?

MR. CONKLIN: We haven't talked on the record at a council meeting about why we would want to switch it, and so now is a good time to do it, and I know that people that follow the SSC meetings may have a much better idea, but, for the other people that are here, I was wondering if somebody could give us a little bit more background, and especially for the people that are listening online on why we're changing.

MR. CARMICHAEL: One of the biggest advantages is, obviously, that it's a more efficient process and a more timely process than the research track. When the SSC discussed this, I think a year or so ago, they had recommended that the next assessment be an operational and that the



selectivity and the other issues be addressed, and they felt that those issues could be addressed within the operational framework, and they were comfortable providing the peer review.

One of the biggest differences is that stand-alone, outside, very intensive peer review that the research tracks get, and that's intended to really review that tool, whereas, in this case, they felt there are some changes to the inputs and such, and so maybe some changes in some of the assessment assumptions, but those are the types of things that they could review and they felt could be handled in this process.

The council, as Jessica mentioned, there were some concerns about whether or not the selectivity issues in particular would be addressed, and that's what kept it in the research track mode. Since that time, I think there's been some more discussion about it and more thought about it, and you've also seen the regular increases in the stock, as shown by the survey CPUE, and you've seen the strong fishery that's out there, and you've heard all the evidence from the people, certainly anecdotally, about how many fish they're seeing, and I think the council, at the last meeting, was starting to feel a little more urgency to get this assessment done and that it could be in the best interest to do this as the operational and do it a little more rapid and get your results a year, or possibly two, sooner than you would otherwise, and it frees up some resources to potentially get you some more stocks in 2022 as well, and so there's a number of advantages to it, and your technical experts and the Science Center felt like we can handle these things through the operational framework.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more questions about that, Chris? So, basically, we're going to get it faster, and some of the concerns that I had were particularly about the selectivity, and it looks like that's going to get addressed, and I'm also really excited that we would bring in these external experts, and I'm hoping that some of those experts are folks from the Gulf that worked on the Gulf red snapper stock assessment, and I guess my concern would be, if there was something that was identified that would normally be identified in the research track process, but the external experts identified it, if there are ways to maybe tweak the model, tweak some of those inputs still, even though it's an operational assessment, and I'm assuming that can happen. Okay. Erik is nodding yes. Good questions. Any more questions? Chris, do you want to talk about this some more?

MR. CONKLIN: No, but I just know that there was a lot of hype before this conversation, and I just wanted everybody that's listening to understand.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: I think a language change would be appropriate with that alternative projections, because I think about a projection, in the time that we have evaluated projections on the SSC, and there's this idea of here's different trajectories of choice. If this is a compliance issue, we can't choose -- We would love to have 100 percent compliance, but the reality is that's not necessarily what's going to be there. It would be something similar to a sensitivity, but this is kind of done at the end of the assessment, and so just thinking about how you want to phrase that, so it doesn't get too confusing with other things that have different meanings when the assessment is being run, or being evaluated.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Is that something that you would like to suggest now, in this wording?

DR. BELCHER: I would like to hear if I'm getting caught up in the weeds on that, but that's just -- My thing, initially, is, when I'm thinking about projections, F is going to be set to some rate, and we make a decision based on that, and so, if we're going forward with this as an alternative projection, is it a selection choice or not? I mean, I see it more as this idea of what are the ranges of no compliance to 100 percent compliance and how does that affect our ability to rebuild, and so that's kind of more of one of those understanding exercises after the fact, and I just don't want it to get confused with some of the other parts of what we do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Good points.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The SSC did talk about that a lot, and I seem to recall that we had some very similar discussion with them, and I think, and maybe George can correct me if I'm wrong, but part of the thinking was they looked at it as sensitivities always tended to look at how the assessment issues up to the terminal year, and projections were looking more at into the future, and they felt that it was important to capture some of that stuff, looking into the future catch levels, which is why they stuck with the language of "projections", but, by the phrasing of "alternative projections", they do kind of mean like a sensitivity-style analysis within the projections, and they added in there the looking at different levels of compliance, because we don't know what that is, necessarily, at this point. I think they do want to capture the same type of thing you described, because, really, it's kind of a sensitivity-type analysis for the projections looking forward to the catch levels in the future.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion? All right. I think we're ready to move on to the next species, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: The next species is vermilion snapper, and this is going to be done through SEDAR 55, an update to that one, and the assessment would have a terminal year of 2020 or 2021, and it would currently use the BAM configuration. This one too is going to be considering the FWRI selectivity study, as it was noted that that study might be relevant for some other species, and it has not been evaluated by the SSC for some other species, and so that's going to need to go on their schedule, to really look into some of those other species.

Other than that, it's pretty much boilerplate information, with the exception of the potential decline in the headboat index since 1992, and so they're going to need to address some of that in the updates, and, for the process, there's going to be SSC representatives to meet via webinar to review model development and provide guidance.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are there questions or comments?

MR. CONKLIN: Sorry to be the only person to keep on talking here today, and so we just finished a vermilion assessment, and why are we doing another one so quick? I know it's a big, economically-important species, but, from what I see, everything looks pretty healthy, and it seems like we might could allocate the resources somewhere else, unless you think it's going to give us a whole lot more quota, and then please do it.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I just had visions of Jack Cox wanting to know when we're going to get more put on the vermilion. Actually, this one comes in because I mentioned that we freed up some resources, potentially, in 2022, by doing the red snapper as an operational, and so this was an

unexpected benefit of that, to look at what are some of the next stocks that we could look at, and so this would actually be done in 2022 and probably affecting your 2023 fishery, and so it makes it quite a few years from -- You know, we had a terminal year at 2016, and so we would be adding four to five years of data, which is kind of our charge.

This highlights one of the things that Clay has done successfully since he's been at the Science Center, is getting the SEDAR planning window out two years, and so, at the May 2020 Steering Committee coming up, we'll be looking at things for 2022, and then the plan is then, in May of 2021, to be looking out to 2023, and so you're going to be doing these things like on this timeline for a stock that you're going to be getting the results four to five years from now, but that's a really great question, to think about why we did this.

What we did as a Steering Committee was to look back and say what are some of the stocks that have been assessed that would be likely candidates, and vermilion snapper and blueline came up as two that are sort of getting to be the older of the ones that aren't already on the schedule somewhere.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Questions or comments? All right.

DR. COLLIER: One last species is blueline tilefish, and this is going to be an update to SEDAR 50, and the terminal year is going to change from 2016 to 2020 to 2021, using the BAM model, and this one is going to be looking at using appropriate CV methods for landings data, to capture the uncertainty in model results, as well as evaluating sensitivity runs for recruitment coming from the Gulf of Mexico into the South Atlantic region.

This was done in part because of past stock ID workshops, which identified that there was some transport of larvae from the Gulf of Mexico into the South Atlantic. The process is going to be convene a panel of the SSC members to meet via webinar and include some Mid-Atlantic Council members in the assessment process, or Mid-Atlantic Council probably SSC, more than council members, in the assessment process.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. This is blueline. Questions or concerns? All right. Now we need a motion to approve those scopes of work for those three species.

MR. POLAND: **I move to approve the scopes of work for the red snapper, blueline tilefish, and vermilion snapper assessments.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It's seconded by Anna. It's under discussion. Just to reiterate, this is changing the red snapper stock assessment from research to operational. Any more discussion? **Any objection? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.** I think we are done with our business. Is there any other business to come before the SEDAR Committee?

MR. BELL: Just so, having that made that decision, then that would go back and we would adjust the schedule and add that in there, the first thing we talked about?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I believe that that happens, I guess, at the next SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, which I believe is set for May, and so then the schedule would be adjusted in May. Good

question. All right. Any other business to come before the SEDAR Committee? All right. Then thank you, Chip, and thank you, John. We're going to adjourn this committee.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on December 2, 2019.)

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Certified By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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January 6, 2020

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